

# FREEDOM

August 1, 2004

*Watch*



**Task Force Linebacker passes mission to CTF Bronco**  
**Cover Story Page 6**

***Army Reserve Chief visits deployed Soldiers***  
***Page 3***



Col. Randy Pullen

## Shipping it off

Spc. Karleta Wheat, Kabul Compound Post Office mail clerk, Kabul, Afghanistan, passes out two suitcases going out in the morning mail run. Troops at the compound use any box or container available to send packages home. All packages have to be inspected, sealed and have the proper forms attached before they are ready for mailing. Wheat is assigned to the Army Reserve's 841st Adjutant General Company (Postal) from Tulsa, Okla.

## Contents



**Cover Story: CTF Bronco relieves MEU, Page 6**  
For four months, the Marines of TF Linebacker have conducted operations requiring resupply missions such as the one seen here throughout southern Afghanistan. They passed responsibility for their areas of operations within Regional Command South to CTF Bronco July 12.  
Cover photo by Marine Gunnery Sgt. Keith A. Milks

- Page 3:** U.S. Army Reserve Commanding General visits troops
- Page 4:** Coalition helps with new girls school
- Page 5:** Hospital benefits from disarmament process
- Page 7:** Tactical communications facility to house new equipment; First care at gate helps local nationals
- Page 8:** Soldiers improve learning environment for Afghan students
- Page 9:** Korean engineers build volleyball courts for school children
- Page 10:** AAFES Rodeo visits forward operating bases
- Page 11:** Mortar teams assist infantry squads
- Page 12:** Aeromedevac team moves casualties
- Page 13:** Safeguarding the Coalition: Sun exposure puts units at risk
- Page 14:** Phone call home gets delivery room response
- Page 15:** Donations improve learning environment



By Mark Baker

## Pvt. Murphy's Law

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# Army Reserve Chief visits Bagram Soldiers

Story and photos by  
Pfc. Chris Stump  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — VIPs pass through Bagram Air Base several times each month. But in the case of a recent three-star's visit, the Soldiers he came to see were the very important people.

During his visit, Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, U.S. Army Reserve chief and U.S. Army Reserve Command commanding general, spent time visiting with reserve Soldiers deployed here and seeing a few of the many projects they are working on. He even took the time to reenlist a few of his troops.

Helmly stopped in Afghanistan as part of a tour through the Middle East to visit the troops under his command and see how they are doing during their deployments, he said. Throughout his

trip he saw his Soldiers performing many essential missions in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Uzbekistan and here.

One of those important tasks is manning the Task Force 325 Combat Support Hospital.

Helmly toured the facility and saw how the reservists, who make up the majority of the staff, provide an essential service to everyone else who serves here.

Many of those missions are ones that not only support the active Army and the Coalition, but bring the two together to work side-by-side.

"Much of the Army's support capability is vested in the Army Reserve," said Helmly.

Though the citizen-Soldiers don't experience their military professions as much as their active-duty counterparts, they are still trained the exact same way their active-duty counterparts are — something that makes missions a success when the two come together, said Helmly.

"We ascribe to train to one standard. We have one set of values as Soldiers, one Soldiers' Creed and one Warrior's Ethos."

These standards have been one of the biggest reasons why operations like current ones here and elsewhere have run smoothly, he said. The Reserve is vital to the Army's success and being able



**Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, U.S. Army Reserve chief and Army Reserve Command commanding general, talks to staff members about hospital operations during a visit to TF 325 CSH July 15.**

to meet the needs of an ever-changing and moving force.

Besides getting out and seeing operations like the hospital at Bagram, he also visited others such as the 367th Engineer Battalion's mine clearing efforts.

While visiting the 367th Eng. Bn., Helmly saw Soldiers in action, one of the main reasons he travels to visit units, he said.

While spending time with the Soldiers, he recognized some of the leaders who make the missions a success. During the day, he administered the oath of reenlistment to five Soldiers and promoted one, thanking them for their service and letting them know he is proud to serve with them.

One of the leaders Helmly reenlisted was Staff Sgt. Joel A. Torres, 841st Adjutant General Company (Postal), U.S. Army Reserve.

Torres said he felt honored to have the top leader in his organization participate in his reenlistment ceremony.

"I believe in the Army, my country and its leadership," he said. "I'm glad senior leaders back us up and show us they think it's important we stay in and serve our country."

Torres is one of the Soldiers doing what Soldiers have always done, and are proud to do — serve their country, said Helmly.

"Soldiers of the Army Reserve are doing what Soldiers have done for 229 years," said Helmly. "They're rucking up and Soldiering on. I'm glad I'm able to share that with them."



**Helmly (right) administers the oath of reenlistment to 1st Sgt. Calvin Wiemer, 367th Eng. Bn., during a visit to Bagram Air Base July 15.**

# Coalition lays cornerstones of growth

Story and photos by  
Pfc. Cheryl Ransford  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AIBAT KHILE, Afghanistan — According to Islamic law, learning is the duty of all Muslims — including females.

But for the past few decades, girls have not been allowed to go to school and learn like the boys. During both Soviet and Taliban rule, girls' schools were burned down and women and girls were no longer allowed to work or go to school.

Now that the Coalition is here to help the people of Afghanistan stabilize the country, getting girls back in school is one of the top priorities for the Afghan people.

With that being a top priority, the Coalition is working with the village elders in Aibat Khile to improve the learning environment for the girls who are starting to go back to school.

The groundbreaking ceremony for Aibat Khile Girls School was held July 15.

"As the number of children in the village grows, so does the number of students," said General Maulano, local mujahedeen commander. "There will be 600 girls attending Aibat Khile Girls School when the construction is done."

The construction of the school is expected to take one month, said Maulano.

"Although there are other girls' schools in the area, the number of girls going to school calls for expanding the current site of Aibat Khile Girls School," said Lt. Col. James Anderson, Facility Engineer Team-17 commander.

Currently, classes are being held in rooms with dirt floors and no lights, he said.

Recognizing the need for improvements at the school, members of the Coalition began planning the new school with the village elders and Zarar, the district governor, about a month and a half ago.

"The people in the village have been very helpful during the planning stages of the school," said Anderson. "By the time the groundbreaking was held, most of the supplies needed for the building of the school were already at the site."

During the groundbreaking ceremony,

Zarar had Anderson, as well as two of the students that will be attending the school, lay the corner stones in the foundation.

"This is a very great day for this area," said Zarar. "When the school is built, more of the children in the area will be able to learn."

Maulano was happy to see the cooperation of the Coalition and the local community.

"It is good for the people to see the relationship between the Coalition and the elders, so they too will learn to trust the Soldiers," he said. "The Soldiers have made it possible for the school to be built and the girls to go to school and learn."

Maulano said he has a dream for his people, and hopes that with the interaction and help of the Coalition it will come true.

"I want the girls to be educated, dedicated and able to live their own lives," said Maulano. "Everyone has the right to do whatever they want in life. The girls should have the right to be doctors, nurses, teachers, pilots or whatever else they might choose to be, just like the boys."

Before the Soviets and Taliban ruled, the women and girls lived very different lives, he said. And as improvements such as the rebuilding of schools continue to be made, the Afghan people may be able to regain that way of life once again.

"Without education a nation is nothing," said Maulano. "The girls are a part of this country and should have the right to add to the future of it by having the same education as the boys."



**Lt. Col. James Anderson, FET-17 commander, lays a cornerstone in the foundation of a school that was funded by Bagram Base Operations and FET-17.**



**Afsana, a student at Aibat Khile Girls School, receives help as she lays a cornerstone in what will soon be her new schoolhouse.**



# DDR process leads to hospital upgrades

## Doctors switch to ANA to help patients

Story and photo by Maj. Greg Park  
Office of Military Cooperation - Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — Staff members at the Kabul Military Hospital, also known as the Chahar Sad Bastari hospital, now have plenty to smile about.

The military hospital, built and used by the Soviets in the 1970s, is receiving up to \$14 million in modern equipment. Part of the new equipment has already arrived and was donated by the United States. This equipment comes as a result of participation in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program.

The 400-bed facility had as many as 1,200 patients during fighting in the mid 1990s.

The hospital has an experienced staff with good knowledge, but doesn't have modern equipment to provide the very best of care for patients. Now, they will have more of the equipment they need to better serve their patients.

"I'm looking forward to new, nice modern equipment for our hospital," said Col. Qadir Shahbaz Khyl, a medical laboratory technician who recently switched from the Afghan Militia Force to the Afghan National Army.

"They applied the DDR process to me



**An Afghan doctor uses the new anesthesia machine to sedate a patient during surgery. The equipment came as a result of doctors switching to the ANA.**

and I accepted. I accepted happily," said Khyl.

"I'm not doing it for money, I'm doing it to serve needy people," he said when asked why he switched to the ANA. "My family and folks were interested and

excited about the change and our future."

Changes like Khyl's are helping with improvements throughout Afghanistan, as he is seeing firsthand at the hospital.

The hospital has already received 400 new beds, carts, I.V. stands, X-ray machines, film processors, six new anesthesia machines, an electrocardiogram machine, an ultra sound machine, a defibrillator and patient monitors.

Currently, the hospital performs 15-20 operations per day. With the hospital's new equipment, these surgeries will be more efficient, with the possibility of conducting a higher number.

AMF physician assistant Capt. Hemayatullah Nasrat said, "For sure I want to switch over, and I've been waiting for two years. I've heard the MOD (Minister of Defense) has approved, and I'm looking forward to seeing the change. It is good for Afghanistan."

Nasrat's specialty is anesthesiology. As a result of his commitment to participate in DDR, specialists from the United States, Turkey and Denmark have begun training him on the new equipment.

"I am efficient using the new equipment. The new equipment is up-to-date and much better than our old Russian equipment," said Nasrat.

As more people participate in DDR, more resources will be available to help specialists like Nasrat effectively treat more patients.

## Enduring Voices

*What has been the hardest part of adapting to a deployed environment?*



**New Zealand Navy  
Chief Petty Officer  
Kaha Cassidy**  
New Zealand PRT  
*"It's hard being away from my family."*



**Marine Lance Cpl.  
Jeff Gramlich**  
3rd Bn. 6th Marine Rgt.  
*"I had trouble getting used to the cultural differences."*



**Spc. Nathaniel Schaefer**  
58th Military Police Co.  
*"It's hard being away from my wife."*



**Marine Capt.  
Ray Gambol**  
Task Force Stonewall  
*"It is hard to get used to not seeing friends and family every day."*

# 22nd MEU leaves mission with CTF Bronco

Story by  
Sgt. Frank Magni  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

TARIN KOWT, Afghanistan — No colors were uncased and no fanfare was raised, but the event was important just the same.

After four months of battling anti-Coalition militants, the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) passed responsibility for two areas of operations within Regional Command South to Combined Task Force Bronco July 12 at Forward Operating Base Ripley.

Since late March, the 22nd MEU, working as Task Force Linebacker, was responsible for providing stability and security in parts of Oruzgan Province, as well as areas in northern Kandahar and Zabul Provinces. Now, four months later, the mission belongs to CTF Bronco, more specifically the “Bobcats” of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division (Light).

“I believe our area of operations is more secure now than when we initially arrived here,” said Marine Col. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., 22nd MEU commander. “My Marines were very proud to bring a sense of hope where there was once none.”

McKenzie added they were also proud to help foster an alternative form of government to what existed under Taliban rule.

Operating under the security of the MEU forces, the United Nations, with assistance from a few non-governmental organizations, was able to facilitate the voter registration of more than 58,000 Afghans, said McKenzie.

After operating with the MEU for the last three weeks, the Bobcats take over the mission of continued security and reconstruction in the developing region.

“These are some of the toughest conditions I’ve ever seen,” said McKenzie. “Coalition members are operating in very high altitudes with little to no infrastructure north of Kandahar city.”

Lt. Col. Terry Sellers, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., commander, said his forces just returned from their first mission in their new AO and have a good idea what kind of challenge they will face.

“There appears to be a lot of work to do in this region,” said Sellers. “We look forward to the challenge and will perform all our tasks to high standards.”

Coming from similar missions in the Ghazni and Parwan Provinces, he said their new areas of operations have huge potential because of the hard work of the 22nd MEU.

“The Marines did an outstanding job stabilizing the region,” he said.

With the area stabilized, the Bobcats can move on to other focus areas.

“After our preliminary patrols, we see that there is more we can bring in terms of reconstruction,” said Sellers.

He said his unit’s first patrols into the area were to set a theme for the local population.

“We passed out school supplies and met with local leaders to further develop plans for reconstruction,” he said. “We wanted to continue the theme that we are here to help, in addition to getting rid of Taliban and other (anti-Coalition militants).”

Sellers said the Bobcats would continue with extended patrols through the area, while the local provincial reconstruction team and NGOs aid in reconstruction.



Marine Cpl. Robert A. Sturkie  
**Marines from Co. C, 1st Bn., 6th Marines, part of the 22nd MEU, move toward an objective during Operation Rio Bravo.**



Marine Cpl. Robert A. Sturkie

**Above: Marine Sgt. Anthony Viggiani, a Co. C, 1st Bn., 6th Marines, squad leader, passes orders to his Marines during a village assessment in the Oruzgan Province.**



Marine Cpl. Jemssy Alvarez Jr.

**Left: The quick reaction team from Co. B, 1st Bn., 6th Marines, sweeps a village in southeastern Afghanistan.**



# ROK engineers build for communications expansion

Story and photo by  
Pfc. Chris Stump  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — An improvement in communications here will occur soon, thanks to two new tactical communications facilities built by the Republic of Korea Army's 100th Engineer Group.

A ceremony July 17 marked the completion of the two facilities which will house new communications equipment, increasing capabilities for Internet and



**Members of the Coalition cut the ribbon to the new tactical communications facilities, which were built by the Republic of Korea Army's 100th Eng. Grp.**

telephone use on Bagram Air Base. Many of the engineers who made the facility possible were also recognized during the ceremony.

The TCFs will facilitate great improvements to the speed of Internet connections here and increase the number of telephone lines that may be run out of Bagram, said C.J. Botts, a technical controller at the facility who ensures the communications equipment works efficiently.

The new building will house more of the equipment that handles all the communications running in and out of Bagram Air Base, he said.

However, all these new benefits wouldn't be possible without a building to protect the equipment.

The 100th Eng. Grp. began construction of the facility in April and completed it efficiently after many hours, days and weeks of hard work, said Col. Nancy J. Wetherill, Combined Task Force Coyote commander.

But the construction project wasn't just about constructing a building, she said. It was about Coalition partners helping each other out and working together.

As members of CTF Coyote, the 100th Eng. Grp. assists with various projects throughout the Coalition, such as schools, facilities like the TCF and other improvements throughout their area of operations.

"The vertical construction capabilities that the Republic of Korea's engineers bring to the Coalition are invaluable to (Combined) Task Force Coyote," said Wetherill.

The buildings are about the different parts of the Coalition working as one team, said Brig. Gen. Charles H. Jacoby, Combined Joint Task Force-76 deputy commander.

"Today is a great day for the Coalition. This highlights the contributions of South Korea to the Global War on Terrorism," he said.

To show their gratitude for the contributions the ROK soldiers made, certificates of achievement were presented by each of the commanders present, recognizing the hard work of the Korean officers and non-commissioned officers who worked hard to make the project a success, said Korean Army Col. Kwon, Tae Whan, 100th Eng. Grp. commander.

But the day wasn't just about the Coalition and the soldiers who built the TCF, said Wetherill. It was also about the Afghan people.

Building facilities like the TCF enable the Coalition to bring in the equipment needed to do a better, more efficient job of improving the situation in the country, she said.

And these improvements are one of the main priorities of the engineer group, said Kwon.

"We are happy to be a part of this great Coalition and help the people here," he said.

A sentiment Jacoby echoed.

"You (ROK engineers) have written another great chapter in South Korea's strong, enduring (relationship) with the U.S.," said Jacoby.

"The strength of this building represents the strength of this Coalition."

## *Medics provide first response at Bagram gate*

Story by  
Pfc. Cheryl Ransford  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Patients come from as far away as Pakistan and Uzbekistan, knowing they will receive the best medical care available. They arrive at the front gate to Bagram Air Base where a triage and treatment station is set up to determine the severity of the situation.

A triage station is set up to evaluate patients and determine

treatment according to medical priority — ensuring those with more serious afflictions are seen first.

Sometimes the initial care from the medics assigned to the units tasked with pulling security at the gate is what saves a patient's life.

"Every day we see an average of six to seven patients, usually admitting one per day to the Egyptian hospital, and one per week to the U.S. hospital," said Spc. Chris Grant, 2nd Battalion, 265th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Florida National

Guard.

Based on the severity of their injury or illness, the medics determine where the patient should be transported.

"Using the training that we have received, we determine if the patient's injury or illness could possibly cause the patient to lose life, limb or eyesight," said Grant. Each of the hospitals on Bagram has different capabilities. Which hospital the patient is transported to is determined by the type and severity of their ailment or injury.

In some cases, if the patient has a minor ailment, they will be treated at the triage station and released without being sent to a hospital, he said.

"We have seen people come through the gate with everything from everyday body aches to congestive heart failure," said Spc. Matt Irving, 2nd Bn., 265th ADA. "We treat the ones we can and help others until further help can arrive."

There have been times when a patient has come through who

**See Gate, Page 14**

# Logistics Soldiers improve Afghan school

Story and photo by  
Spc. Claudia Bullard  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

NEW SALO KALAY, Afghanistan — For members of Maj. Daniel Wilson's S-4 shop, serving in Afghanistan means working mainly within the confines of Kandahar Air Field, making sure the members of Task Force Bronco have everything they need to successfully complete their missions.

The Soldiers' main responsibility is to manage supplies and logistics for the task force.

So when the opportunity to improve conditions at a local school presented itself, Wilson and nine members of his team jumped at the chance to 'get outside the wire.'

The team's mission was to build a wooden floor and benches for a one-room school at New Salo Kalay, just outside Kandahar Airfield. The children had been sitting on a dirt floor with few school materials. Moved by their situation, Wilson wrote a letter home to obtain supplies from friends and family.

Wilson believes Soldiers need an opportunity to understand why they're here, and said both parties will benefit from the project. Not only do the students get some badly needed improvements to their school, but his Soldiers get a chance to make a stronger connection with local people.

"My Soldiers sit inside all day," said Wilson, who stressed that though their work is vitally important, it is sometimes hard to see how it affects the Afghan people. "Their morale tends to drop. Getting them out doing a project like this reminds them what they are here for."

Once on the ground, the team was greeted warmly by village elder Hay Atullah and teacher Agha Jan. A gentle-spoken young man in his 20s, Jan said he gave up teaching for three years during the Taliban's harsh rule. Through the team's interpreter, Jan said he was "feeling very good" about the improvements. "Our government is so poor," said Jan. "We are very appreciative."

Jan said during the Taliban rule there was no education in English and science and that children "got an education inside the house" from their fathers. The unity of villages was affected because of the cancella-

tion of classes. Afghan schools are much like schools in rural America which are often a center point for the community. "We're really glad you are here," said Jan. "We are glad the Taliban is gone."

With the help of the village men, the team unloaded materials and equipment. Capt. Marek Ludyjan and Sgt. Jonathon Swigert set up the generator and a compound miter saw while Afghan men and children gathered to watch Spc. David Fifeld cut the lumber.

Pfc. Sara Grotke, who was sitting with a group of boys pulling nails from their packaging, said she understands that her work in the S-4 shop is essential to mission accomplishment but was eager to volunteer because she felt like she was actually "doing something." Grotke, previously out with a line unit to search villages, said this mission was strictly to win hearts and minds. "The other mission I went on was more tactical.



**2nd Lt. Jason Johnson (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Noye build benches for a village school at New Salo Kalay.**

We searched for anti-tank weapons, RPG's and so forth. This time we're getting to know the villagers. Last time the village men were all in one place waiting for us to search their village. They were pretty tense. The difference here is, these villagers are getting to know us."

Nearby, 2nd Lt. Jason Johnson, assistant S-4, was building benches. "I was quite happy to come," said Johnson. "I was glad to get out here and do something positive." He said this day would be well spent in terms of getting the S-4 shop to see the big picture. "It definitely gives us a sense of purpose. I don't think they feel they're just pushing paper anymore."

While the Soldiers worked on the school, Wilson met with village elders. In an inner courtyard that lay between the school and

the village mosque, Atullah invited Wilson to drink chai (tea). Wilson conversed with Atullah, through an interpreter, about daily life in the village. Atullah said his village didn't have many modern conveniences, but the villagers have a strong love for one another.

Spc. Kenneth Norris, whose job was providing security, said, "It's amazing how happy they (the villagers) are and how happy the kids are."

Pvt. Malorie Alonzo, who pulled security with Norris, said she was nervous at first about going outside the compound. During the visit she said, "I'm really glad I came." Alonzo commented that the impressions that Soldiers have of Afghans should be formed by meeting them, not by hearsay and news reports. "Just sitting inside our office all of the time I think sometimes we can get the wrong idea about the people here. They are really no different than we are."

Wilson, Swigert, Ludyjan and Sgt. Charles Duncan laid the last of the decking for the school room floor. Johnson and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Noye, S-4 noncommissioned officer in charge, raced to get the last of the benches made. A few Afghan men, an interpreter and an Afghan National Army soldier joined in. The heat was excruciating, but the team's morale ran high.

Wilson and Jan, obviously pleased, surveyed the completed floor and benches and made plans for future improvements. The team intends to bring mats, school supplies and paint for the walls in the near future.

Although the project had taken longer than expected, the villagers would not let the team leave without lunch. U.S. Soldiers and villagers sat side-by-side for their meal. A long cloth was spread on the floor in the guest house and rice, okra, and stew were served along with the traditional bread. There was a realization that everyone was in this together.

Noye later said accomplishing this project shows that Coalition forces care and keep their word. "We aren't the greatest carpenters in the world, but I think they saw we put our sweat and hard work into it. We are planning to go back and finish the girls' side," he said.

"We wanted to contribute something. We do the logistics thing pretty well, but you can't really see the results. This you can see."



# Engineers finish local school project

## *Volleyball courts help local youth stay in shape*

Story and photos by  
Pfc. Cheryl Ransford  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Although facilities were in place to promote academic growth at Bagram Air Base Boys High School, there was no place available to promote physical well-being.

Looking for a way students would be able to exercise as part of their daily school activities, Principal Dad Kwawda Jahish, Bagram Air Base Boys High School, approached the Republic of Korea Army's 100th Engineer Group.

"I wanted a way for the children to exercise and knew that the Republic of Korea soldiers would know how to help," said Jahish.

Soldiers from the unit began constructing two volleyball courts April 26.

"With the help of Task Force Dragon, we were able to get the funding for the project," said Korean army Col. Kwon, Tae Whan, Republic of Korea 100th Engineer Group commander.

Task Force Dragon donated \$2,000



**Korean engineers from the 100th Eng. Grp. and students and teachers from the Bagram Air Base Boys High School play volleyball on the school's new courts.**

toward the construction at the school, in hopes that if the children stay fit by playing sports now, they will be able to live healthier, happier lives later, said Col. James Boyle, TF Dragon commander.

The soldiers of the Republic of Korea Army's Zaher Company, 100th Engineer Group, with the help of some of the students, completed the two courts just two months later.

"The reason there are two courts is so the teachers and high school students can play on the concrete court," said Jahish, "while the elementary and middle school students are able to play on the sand court."

To officially open the courts, members of the ROK 100th Eng. Grp., TF Dragon and the school gathered for a ceremony July 17. It was a day of celebration for everyone involved.

Kwon told the crowd these stu-

dents are a vital part of the nation of Afghanistan.

"It is great to see so many people taking the time to be a part of the ceremony. I have the highest level of gratitude for all who were involved in the (construction of the volleyball courts). Without everyone's help, this project would not have been a success."

Jahish also wanted to thank everyone for helping the students of his school.

"I appreciate the Korean support for us in building the volleyball court," he said. "Seeing the work that has been done here, I can see that the Coalition is making progress in the right direction."

The Coalition has made a long-term commitment to assist in rebuilding Afghanistan after many years of war, said Kwon. The progress that can be seen throughout Afghanistan shows that the success of Operation Enduring Freedom is not out of reach.

After the ceremony, the Korean engineer team who worked on the volleyball courts and some of the students took part in a friendly game of volleyball.

While watching the game and those around the volleyball court, Jahish voiced his gratitude for the project.

"I appreciate the attention and hard work that the Coalition has put into the school," he said. "I hope they are able to continue to help the people of this area and the rest of Afghanistan."



**Dad Kwawda Jahish (left), Bagram Air Base Boys High School principal, hugs Korean army Col. Kwon, Tae Whan, 100th Eng. Grp. commander, in gratitude after the opening of the school's volleyball courts July 17.**

# AAFES rounds up troops for rodeo

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ASADABAD, Afghanistan — Mention the word “rodeo” and most would think broncs, bulls and buckles. But mention rodeo at many forward operating bases in Afghanistan, and the faces of the Coalition members serving there light up with anticipation.

Just ask the service members assigned to Forward Operating Base Asadabad. The rodeo to them is the Army and Air Force Exchange Services Rodeo conducted here every month. Although no one knows the origin of the title, the importance of the event is the same.

“They’re glad the rodeo is here,” said Marine Cpl. Jeshua Rios, of his fellow service members during the AAFES Rodeo here July 13. As a cook in the FOB chow hall, Rios sees most of the service members assigned here every day and can tell when their spirits are raised.

“This is a real booster for everybody here,” said the Marine from Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.

Since those stationed at the remote FOBs rarely have the opportunity to shop for personal items — such as snacks, hygiene products and entertain-

ment — at their locations, AAFES brings the store to them.

The monthly visit generates a lot of anticipation.

“We look forward to (the rodeo),” said Spc. Antonio Gordon, 2nd Battalion, 265th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Forward 3. “It’s a nice way to be able to get the things we need.”

But it’s not just the opportunity to buy junk food that lifts their spirits.

Representatives from the Bagram Air Base Post Office come to process packages being sent home, finance clerks cash checks and dispense cash, and a legal services Soldier answers questions and processes paperwork such as Powers of Attorney. Representatives from U.S. Army Reserve Affairs, retention and the Army Continuing Education System are also on hand to answer any questions the service members might have.

With all these services available, the rodeo doesn’t just provide a huge morale boost to the troops. It also helps their leaders.

“Having all the assets come out here to us makes my job a lot easier,” said Marine 1st Sgt. Anthony Page, Company K, 3rd Bn., 6th Marines, first sergeant.

When his Marines have a need that might require them to fly to Bagram Air Base, he can usually tell them to wait for the rodeo to come “and (every-

thing’s) all right here.”

Page sees the difference the four-hour event makes in his Marines.

“This is something good for the Marines, good for their morale,” he said. “They look forward to this once a month, especially some of the guys we have on the outer posts.”

The event is coordinated by representatives from the Combined Joint Task Force-76 personnel section and stops at FOBs Salerno, Gardez, Tarin Kowt, Jalalabad and Asadabad once a month, said 1st Lt. Linda North, CJTF-76 personnel chief of operations.

To ensure as many service members are being touched by the rodeo as possible, North explained that she is constantly working on ways to improve the program.

“Starting in August we’re looking at expanding to more forward sites,” she said.

Until the expansion occurs, it is a sure bet that those who were touched by the rodeo at FOB Asadabad were happy as they filed out, their shopping bags full with CDs, food, fitness supplements and entertainment accessories.

The only complaint of the day — “They need more junk food,” said Gordon, who was unable to find any snacks when he arrived. Eager to provide an explanation for the disappointment, he added with a laugh, “but I got here late.”



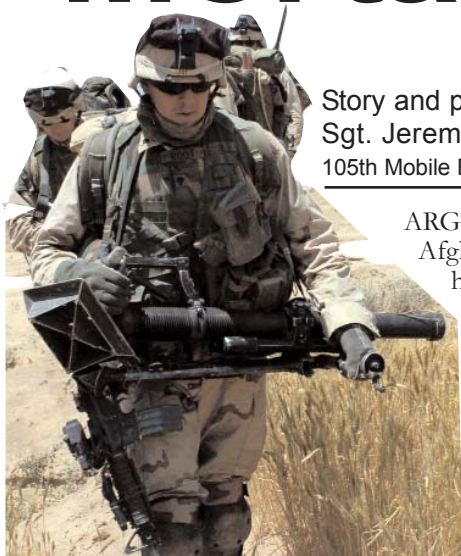
**Clockwise from left:** Pfc. Katrina Taylor, 2nd Bn., 265th ADA Rgt., Forward 3, skims through CD titles during the AAFES Rodeo at FOB Asadabad July 13.

Marine Lance Cpls. Eric Smith (left) and Michael Williamson, Co. K, 3rd Bn., 6th Marines, discuss diet supplements while shopping at the AAFES Rodeo July 13. Kathleen Connelly (left), education services officer, discusses different college options with Spc. Brian King, 2nd Bn., 265th ADA Rgt., Forward 3, during the rodeo.



# Mortars: *Indirect fire support brings added power, deters enemy*

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Jeremy Clawson  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



**Spc. Matthew Root, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., mortarman, carries his team's 60mm mortar system during unit movement through Argandab Valley.**

ARGANDAB VALLEY, Afghanistan — Watching his team place mortar aiming stakes, Spc. Donald King entered grid coordinates on an M-23 Mortar Ballistic Computer ready to deploy his team's 60 mm mortar system. The team prepared to provide indirect fire for troops as they moved into action during Operation Dragon Tree.

On this mission through the Argandab Valley in southcentral Afghanistan, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, moved to search a village. King and his team positioned themselves to provide over-watch of the villages on both sides of the objec-

tive and the ridgeline in the distance.

"The mortar is the most casualty-producing weapon in the company," said King. The enemy knows this too and it makes the unit a "hard target."

For the enemy, a hard target is not only one with a hard shell such as armor plates, but also one with the ability to respond with effective fire. The job of a mortar team is to provide timely and accurate indirect fire to support units as they maneuver across the battlefield.

The mortar team's presence is a deterrent to enemy forces, said Spc. Matthew Root, another team member. The enemy knows when mortar teams are providing cover for Soldiers as they search the villages, and "it makes the enemy think twice before trying anything," said Root. This deterrence enables troops to complete their missions with limited enemy contact.

King said Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters coming face-to-face with the U.S. infantry troops since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 will reconsider confronting Coalition forces. "I've never been on the opposite side of a mortar, but the (Taliban) probably have at one time and it's probably not too fun," he said.

Moving through the mountainous terrain taxes the toughest infantryman, as each Soldier is weighted with his combat load of equipment, weapons and ammunition. For mortar teams, that weight is compounded by the mortar system.

The gunner usually carries the cannon, bipod, sight unit and two or three rounds, said Root. The assistant gunner carries the mortar base plate, while more rounds are divided among the line company fire teams, each round weighing nearly five pounds.

Once the team has set up the mortar position, they can respond with supporting fire within seconds of receiving a mission. Ground troops call for fire adjustments and within three rounds the team can lay a barrage of mortars on target.

A mortar team carries four different types of rounds, each used for a different effect. The team has participated in numerous combat missions to shut down terrorists, and as mortarmen they stand ready to strike — from a distance.

The nature of an over-watch position keeps King and his team away from most of the close encounters. But this doesn't detract from their ability to hinder the enemy.

As the Company C Soldiers wrap up their mission, the mortar team stays hard, covering the infantrymen as they confiscate weapons. With this mission complete, the mortarmen once again proved their ability at deterring enemy forces and providing additional firepower if the enemy decides to rise to the challenge.



**Root (left) kneels to adjust his team's mortar, while Pfc. Joseph Borgula makes adjustments to the sights on the system.**



**Spc. Donald King, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., mortar team leader, enters grid coordinates into an M-23 Mortar Ballistic Computer during Operation Dragon Tree in the Argandab Valley.**



# Evacuation teams transport casualties

Story and photos by  
Air Force Master Sgt.  
Andrew Gates  
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — When service members are seriously ill or injured and need to be transported, a team of medical experts are always on-hand to ensure as comfortable a ride as possible.

“We are responsible for moving casualties in-theater as well as between theaters,” said Air Force Capt. Karl Schaab, 376th Expeditionary Air Evacuation Squadron aeromedical evacuation operations. “We move people from the collection point at Bagram to Ramstein or Rhein Main (air bases) in Germany, taking patients to the Army regional hospital in Landstuhl.”

The process starts when one of the U.S. service members in country has a condition which requires significant hospitalization or specialized treatment.

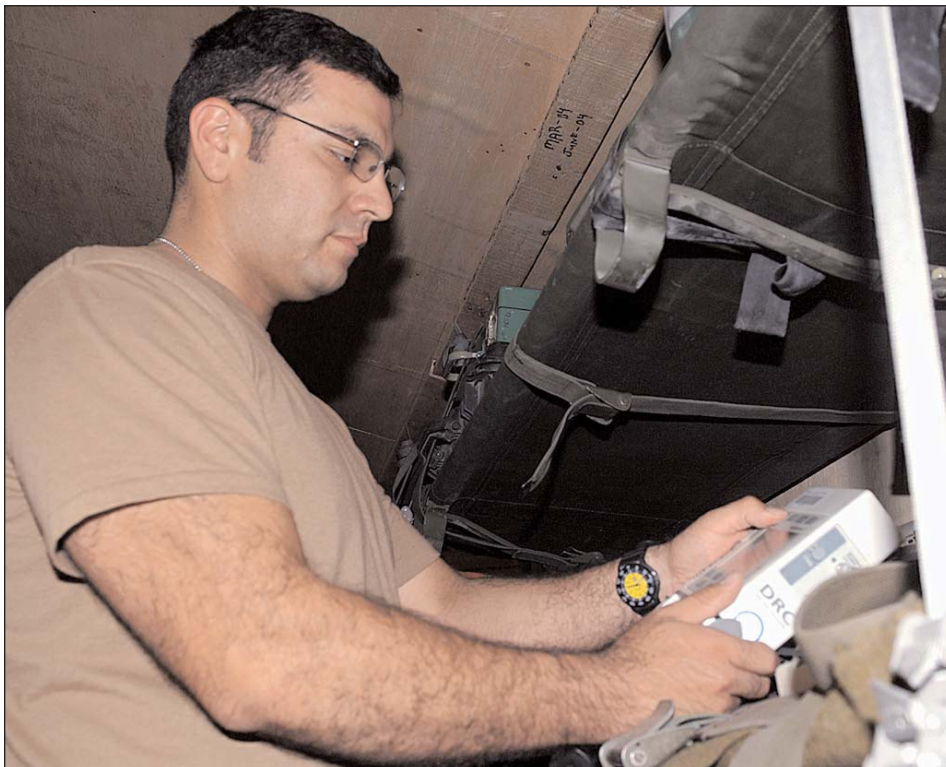
Some flights are due to ordinary medical conditions.

“Last week, we had a 21-year-old Soldier who went into diabetic shock,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Virgilio Comia, aeromedical flight technician. The



**Air Force Tech. Sgt. Gabriel Aguilar, 376th EAES aeromedical evacuation crew, inspects a triple channel intra-venous pump before adding it to the supply inventory for a flight.**

patient had to be taken to Landstuhl for medical treatment. “She’s doing fine now,” said Comia, a reservist assigned here from the 349th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Travis Air



**Air Force Capt. Terry Bates, 376th EAES critical care air transport team nurse, prepares a life-sign monitor for an upcoming flight.**

Force Base, Calif.

Other flights are not as simple.

The team recently had to evacuate a patient who had lost part of an arm due to a landmine explosion, said Schaab. Patients like this often require special monitoring and treatment during transport.

“When someone in this theater needs medical evacuation, we get notified through the Aeromedical Evacuation Control Team. They tell us when and where to move a patient,” said Schaab, a reservist deployed here from the 445th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio.

Once the aeromedical evacuation team has been told to move a patient, they obtain opportune airlift on the next available aircraft. “We can use any type of cargo aircraft – C-12s, C-17s or C-130s, for instance – as opportune airlift,” he said.

Shortly before the patients are supposed to load and the plane takes off, an aeromedical evacuation crew prepares the aircraft, setting up litters or other equipment to ensure a safe journey for their patients. It takes an aeromedical evacuation team just under an hour to configure the cargo area of an aircraft to carry patients. “We have to move quickly to ensure the aircraft is ready when the patients arrive,” said Schaab.

The team usually makes two flights each week to Germany – on each flight, they normally carry one or two litters and five to six mobile patients at most, said Air Force Maj. Janie Johnson, an aeromedical evacuation flight liaison assigned to the 622nd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at MacDill AFB, Fla.

Getting a plane, and then getting that plane ready for patients takes a lot of work. “We get a lot of cooperation from everyone – the aerial port, aircrew and loadmaster,” said Schaab. “Everyone pitches in.”

Sometimes, one of the patients is in critical condition – in serious jeopardy of losing life or limb. That’s when another team of medics assists with transporting patients, said Air Force Senior Airman Frank Dumbaуска, deployed here from Lackland AFB, Texas. Dumbaуска is a member of the critical care air transport team. “If there is a critical patient who

See *Evac*, Page 15



# Proper steps keep skin safe from sun damage

## Safeguarding the Coalition

Story by  
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl and  
Sgt. Frank Magni  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AFGHANISTAN — Many people only think about protection from the sun when they are going to the beach. But the harmful rays of the sun are a big risk factor for Coalition members operating in the harsh conditions of Afghanistan as well.

During the summer months, many service members look for ways to avoid the heat, often leaving themselves susceptible to damage from the sun.

"In these summer months more people are trying to wear less because it is so hot," said Sgt. Jamar Grouner, Combined Task Force Bronco preventive medicine non-commissioned officer. "But exposed skin can increase risk for sun or wind burn."

Sunburn is the skin's reaction to overexposure to the sun's UVA and UVB ultraviolet rays. While some exposure to the sun can be healthy, if skin receives too much exposure to ultraviolet rays, it actually burns. The burns can cause pain and infection, and frequent sunburn increases the risk for skin cancer later in life, said Grouner.

In Afghanistan, higher altitudes actually add to the sun's intensity, causing people to burn faster, he said.

Additionally, service members need to be aware of the effects of required medicine like doxycycline, which contains a warning to minimize exposure to the sun.

"Medicines that fall into the same family as doxycycline, as well as many other types of medication, render people more susceptible to the sun's rays," said Maj. Randall Booth, Task Force 325 Combat Support Hospital doctor. "They also give your body less of a heat toler-

ance. This makes it even more important to protect yourself from the sun."

There are certain safety measures that can be taken to prevent sunburn, said Booth.

"Soldiers should cover up exposed skin and use sunscreen — at least SPF 15," he said. "It's also important to keep drinking plenty of water. If you get dehydrated, your body loses its sweating capabilities, and this takes away a shield between your skin and the sun."

The key to sun and wind protection is basically a matter of putting barriers between the elements and skin, said Grouner. "When people are in 'full-battle rattle' there are only a few areas that are exposed," he said. "But these areas should also be protected."

Keeping service members protected from the sun is a leader's responsibility, said 1st Lt. Jeff Soule, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, platoon leader.

"As a part of our pre-combat inspections, I make sure my people are taking plenty of sun block," said Soule. "The sunblock the Army issues also acts as an insect repellent, so it does a lot for my Soldiers."

Leaders should always make sure there is plenty of sun block available to their personnel.

"We are the ones responsible for making sure our Soldiers are protected," said Staff Sgt. Antonio Heyward, Task Force 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, squad leader. "It's not that hard to make sure we have things like sun block and water available."

While having the resources available is a

key part of sun protection, supervision is equally important.

"As NCOs, we need to be watching our Soldiers," said Staff Sgt. David Coakley, a TF 1st Bn., 501st Para. Inf. Rgt. supply sergeant. "A lot of times, when we are doing missions out in the sun, our Soldiers don't even realize when they've been exposed to it for too long. It's our responsibility to keep an eye on them and determine when they need to take a break."

There are different factors that should raise caution flags to both leaders and individuals, letting them know when they need to take extra steps to protect against the elements. It's important for leaders to take the time to identify at-risk service members.

"People riding in convoys are exposed to the sun less than someone that might be working in a motor pool," said Grouner. "Each person needs to identify their level of risk and prepare based on different factors."

The first factor is genetics. People with fair skin and light-colored hair are more likely to get sunburn than people with darker complexions and hair.

"Those people who have a history of getting sunburn, will get sunburn out here," said Grouner. The next factor is the amount of exposure a service member will experience during their mission.

"I've seen that most service members that are outside the wire are required to wear more equipment and have less of a problem than service members who are able to remove their hats or tops," he said.

Another key to preventing sunburn is giving troops time in the shade.

It may not always be easy to implement work/rest cycles to give troops time in the shade, but it can be the difference between mission accomplishment and mission failure, said Coakley.

"If I lose even one Soldier to something like exposure to the sun, our mission may have to stop," he said. "If working around the hotter part of the day means we accomplish our mission, then that is what we do."



Items like these sun blocks protect service members from the sun's UV rays, which lead to sunburn and an increased risk of skin cancer.

Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

# Tropic Lightning Soldier calls just in time

Story by Staff Sgt. Twana Atkinson  
CJTF-76 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIPLEY, Afghanistan — The military calls on Soldiers to leave their friends and family behind for their country at any moment's notice. And many Soldiers deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, like Staff Sgt. Wade Smith, will return home to newly born babies they have never met.

Smith, Company C, 2nd Battalion 5th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division (Light), has served four and half years in the Army as an infantryman. This is the Fort Worth, Texas, native's first deployment.

"When I left, my wife was seven months pregnant and we were expecting a baby boy," he said.

Smith, a squad leader in charge of eight Soldiers, has been in country since late

April. He and his Soldiers conduct important missions daily in order to capture or deny militants sanctuary in multiple areas of Afghanistan.

Smith and his squad were enjoying a break between missions one evening after a week of dismounted patrols and

*"I just want to make my baby girl proud."*

Staff Sgt. Wade Smith  
Co. C, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt.  
squad leader

village assessments. Smith decided to take advantage of his time and call home.

"I called my wife first but I didn't get an answer," said Smith. "So, I decided to call my mother-in-law."

As Smith's mother-in-law answered the

phone, Smith said he could hear a lot of talking in the background. His wife and family were in the delivery room and the baby was only minutes from arriving.

"I just got lucky and happened to call while my wife was in the delivery room," said Smith.

After being on the phone a short while with his mother-in-law, he heard a lot of screaming and, moments later, a baby's cry.

"I was surprised to hear that we had a baby girl," said Smith. "We were told the whole time that she was a boy."

Smith proudly talks about his newborn daughter, and says he is even more dedicated to his mission and to his Soldiers here in Afghanistan.

"I just feel so happy that I was able to at least hear her being born," said Smith. "I am one of a number of Soldiers who are sacrificing time with their families for this country, so I'm here to do what I signed up for. I want to make my baby girl proud."

## Gate: Local nationals get first treatment from medics

*continued from Page 7*

has lost a limb due to an explosion, said Grant. The medics make sure the patient is stabilized and give what medical treatment they can.

"Some days we are busy, and others we don't see anyone," said Grant. "We want to be busy because it makes the day go by faster. But on the other hand, in our line of work if we're busy that means people are hurt and that's not what we want."

Throughout the day, Grant rotates trained combat life savers between the gate and the triage station to help treat the patients. Not only does this help the patient, but it also prepares the combat life savers mentally for situations they may encounter in combat.

Once the ambulance arrives and the patient is taken to the hospital, the medics continue helping the other patients coming through the front gate.

Once the medics finish seeing patients at the gate, they go to the hospital to check on any



Pfc. Cheryl Ransford

**Spc. Chris Grant (left), 2nd Bn., 265th ADA, medic, and Spc. Kelly Gonzales, 551st MP Company medic, place clean bandages on Naseer's arm three weeks after he was hit by a truck outside Bagram Air Base.**

patients who have been admitted.

"We like going to the hospital when patients have been sent in. Not only to see how the patient is doing, but also to get feedback from the nurses and doctors about what was done right (at the triage station) and what could be improved next time," said Grant. "Also going back and letting the patients see your face again helps them realize

that the Soldiers do care about them. Whether stitching a wound or putting cream on a cut, a little piece of you stays with them."

Being able to interact with the local population has helped these medics understand the value of their job.

"This is my third deployment and I've never been anywhere that had this much interaction with the local community," said

Irving. "You're able to see the looks on their faces change from apprehension to appreciation."

Before coming to Afghanistan, it was hard for some of them to explain to their families why they must be away for so long. But after being here just a short while, it's easier, said Grant.

"We have been here for three months and I have treated as many people with gun shot wounds, burns and missing limbs, if not more, than I did in the four years I was on active duty," said Irving. "It's good to know that we have been able to help so many people in just a short amount of time."

Helping the locals, especially the children, and making an impression on their lives is one of the most important things the Coalition can do, said Grant.

"In a few years, the kids that we treat today will be the ones running the country," he said. "Hopefully, they will look back and remember all the ways the Coalition has helped them and keep the country moving in a positive direction."



# FET improves learning environment

Story and photo by  
Pfc. Cheryl Ransford  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

SAYED KHAIL DISTRICT, Afghanistan — Throughout Afghanistan, Coalition forces are helping the Afghan people improve their educational opportunities.

Bagram Air Base's Base Operations team and Facility Engineer Team-17 added to those efforts with donations in Sayed Khail District July 15.

The donations given to the school during the visit were school bags for each of the students, said Lt. Col. James Anderson, FET commander.

Soldiers have been working with the local government and village elders in Sayed Khail for five months to improve the Sayed Khail Girls Middle School.

"When we first went to Sayed Khail district, we saw a school that was being held in a field with the children sitting in classroom formations in the dirt," said Anderson. "So, we went to the village elders and asked what they would like us to do to improve the school."

Four months later, the children are sitting on benches in classrooms made out of shipping containers, said Anderson.

"When the project was first proposed, we tried to find the fastest way to get buildings for the children. The solution was (shipping containers)," he said. "We found a supplier in Kabul and bought a total of eight for the school through the

Commander Emergency Relief Program. Not only was it easy to convert the shipping containers to classrooms, but they were also relatively easy to move to the site of the school.

"Each classroom is made out of two (shipping containers) with stairs and an awning connecting two classrooms," said Anderson.

Since the classrooms were set up, the number of children in the school has grown from about 100 to 750.

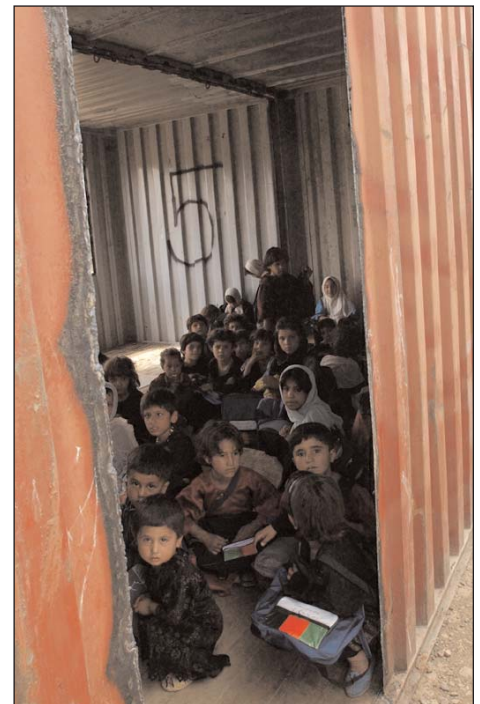
"There are two sessions each day," said Zai-Gul, one of three female teachers at Sayed Khail Girls Middle School. "One is in the morning and the other in the afternoon."

The teachers, and children alike, are very appreciative of the help they have received from the Soldiers.

"I have worked at this school for one year. It's nice to finally have classrooms instead of sitting in the dirt," said Zai-Gul.

While the school now has buildings, the FET Soldiers are working on ways to get the needed supplies for the children to have a better learning experience, said Anderson.

"With the buildings set up for classrooms, we are now working on getting textbooks and desks for the students, and white boards for the teachers," he said. "We are also planning on putting in windows and doors on the (shipping containers) to help keep the outside elements out of the classroom so the children don't have so many distractions



**Students at Sayed Khail Girls Middle School peer out the entrance of their shipping container classroom. Soon, they will have doors and windows.**

during school."

Abdul Baqee, Sayed Khail Girls Middle School headmaster, had nothing but thanks for the Soldiers working on the school.

"Thank you for all you have done for the children," he said. "With your help the children will be able to learn more and have a better future."

## Evac: AF teams ready to evacuate injured personnel

*continued from Page 12*

needs to be airlifted, we take care of the patient with assistance from the aeromedical evacuation crew," he said. "A critical patient is one who won't survive long if they stay down-range — someone we need to get to a hospital quickly." The CCATT normally consists of a technician, a nurse and an emergency room doctor or pulmonary specialist.

Critical patients have to be stabilized enough to be moved before they can be

transported, said Air Force Capt. Terry Bates, a nurse on the CCATT, deployed here from Andrews AFB, Md. "If someone has a life-threatening emergency, we need to get them to a hospital as quickly as possible, so we want to make sure they can be transported safely. If we expect them to have some problem in flight, we take precautions." This could mean everything from intubating (inserting breathing tubes) a patient who they believe might have respiratory problems to procedures to relieve

internal bleeding.

"If we think there may be a problem while we are in flight, we try to be proactive and prepare the patient appropriately before we ever take off," said Bates.

Since the CCATT is not aircrew, they need an aeromedical evacuation crew traveling with them. "The aeromedical evacuation crew sets up the aircraft and gets everything ready for us when we arrive with the patient. They also help out with our patient if they have time — or if they don't have any patients on the

flight," said Bates.

The unit has three aeromedical evacuation crews — all of whom are in the Reserves, said Johnson. The unit also has one critical care team.

"If we send out our CCATT, though, we bring in an augmenting crew from another unit — that way we always have someone here for the war-fighters," she said.

Whether it is the actual CCATT crew or an augmenting crew, there is always a team at the ready, poised for any medical situation that comes their way.

# Safety First: Animals



**Pets and unit mascots are prohibited by U.S. CENTCOM General Order 1A. Stray animals often carry communicable diseases that can be easily spread to humans.**